

# The Discipline and Suspension Dilemma

Dr. Bernadeia Johnson



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1

Minnesota State University, Mankato  
 Leading for Racial Equity with MnEEP/Superintendent  
 Academy  
 The Center for Engaged Leadership  
 (District, Principal and Teacher Leadership Institutes)

“Unapologetically talking about the impact of race on outcomes and  
 engagement of students.” – B. Johnson

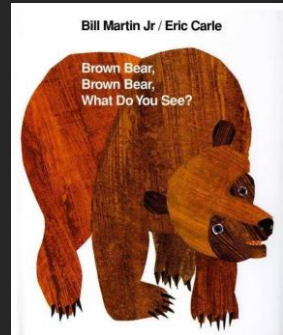


Partnerships for Racial Equity in Education

2

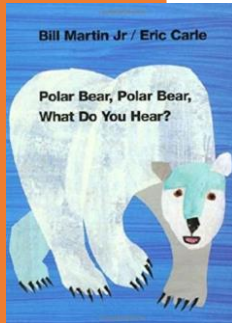


“Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?” - Bill Martin, Jr.



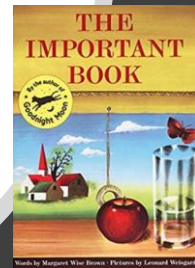
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“Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?”  
-Bill Martin Jr.



4

The important thing about **suspensions** is that they **disproportionally impact** Black, Brown, Special Education, FRL, and Indigenous youth.

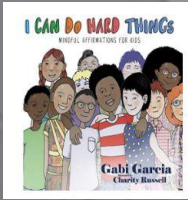


5

## Commonalities

Highest poverty  
 Lowest performing schools  
 Over represented in Exclusionary Programs, ie. Special Education  
 Most probationary teachers  
 Predominantly White teachers

6



# Black, Brown & Indigenous Students PreK-12

## Success Indicators

- Advanced HS Coursework (IB, AP, CE, PSEO)
- Standardized Scores That Meet or Exceed Expectations (ACT/SAT, MCA)
- Grade Level or Higher Reading Level
- Over 90% Attendance
- Preschool Participation

## Risk Indicators

- Remedial HS Coursework
- Stagnant or Below Expected Growth Scores (WIDA ACCESS, MCA)
- Below Grade Level Reading After 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade
- Less than 90% Attendance
- High referrals to Special Education

7

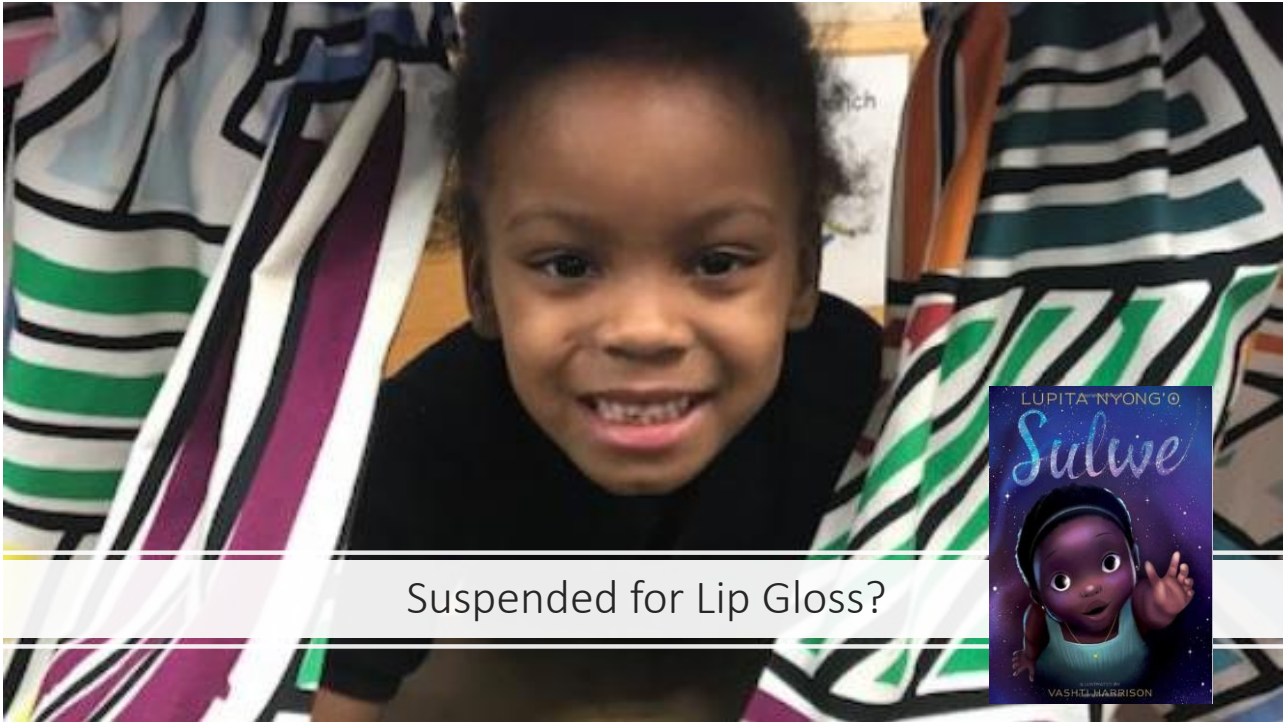
"If you were a **white student** being naughty, you were called '**precocious,**' '**bright,**' someone who is **inquisitive,**

and if you were a **black child**, it was, like, '**you're a thug, you're just not meant for school**'.

And if you go deeper around that, it's that they already determined what the student's future will be." – B. Johnson



8

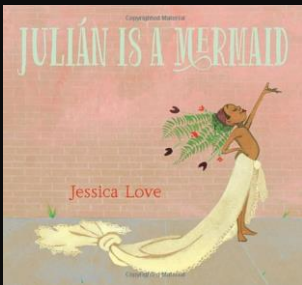


Suspended for Lip Gloss?

9



Same Behavior:  
Different Race,  
Different Outcome



10

## Differences in Academic Outcomes

Minnesota 3 <sup>rd</sup> Graders – Not from Poverty			Minnesota 3 <sup>rd</sup> Graders from Poverty		
Non FRL eligible White students	69.2% proficient in reading	81.6% proficient in math	FRL eligible White students	45.9% proficient in reading	58.6% proficient in math
Non FRL eligible Asian students	62.9% proficient in reading	75.4% proficient in math	FRL eligible Asian students	29.5% proficient in reading	41.9% proficient in math
Non FRL eligible Indigenous students	49.2% proficient in reading	60.8% proficient in math	FRL eligible Indigenous students	28.3% proficient in reading	37.3% proficient in math
Non FRL eligible Latino Students (Not EL)	52.4% proficient in reading	60.5 % proficient in math	FRL eligible Latino Students (Not EL)	26.3% proficient in reading	34.2% proficient in math
Non FRL eligible African Am. Students	51% proficient in reading	56.5% proficient in math	FRL eligible African Am. Students	28.9% proficient in reading	35.1% proficient in math

Assessment FRP by Student Group Data – Minnesota Department of Education  
Accessed 3.3.2020

11

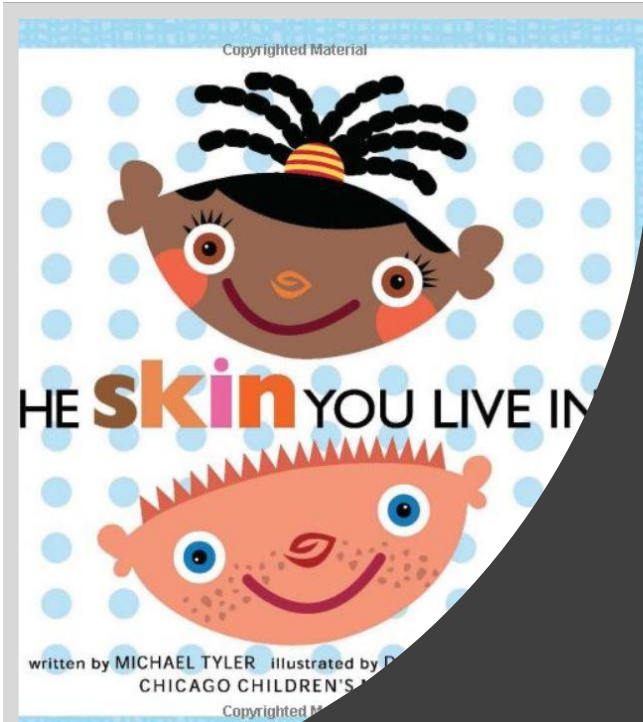
## Differences in Behavior Outcomes

Discipline for the 2017-18 Academic Year

Race/Ethnicity	% of Enrollment	Total Disciplinary Actions	% of Total Disciplinary Actions	Proportionality
Indigenous	1.6%	2,813	5.5%	Overrepresented (5x)
Asian	6.9%	835	1.6%	
Black	11.1%	20,511	40.0%	Overrepresented (4x)
Latino	9.3%	5,534	10.8%	
Multi-Racial	4.7%	4,064	7.9%	Overrepresented
White	66.4%	17,505	34.1%	
	TOTAL	51,262		

Minnesota Department of Education.  
Accessed February 18, 2020.

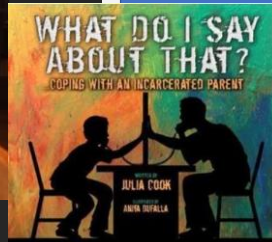
12



The important thing about suspensions is that they disproportionately impact Black, Brown, Special Education, FRL and Indigenous youth.

13

I am here as a Black educator.



Dear Myon,

My name is Bernadeia Johnson and I was your 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Highwood Hills in St. Paul school district. I often think about where my students are now and how they are living their lives. I follow the Presidential campaign and Minnesota Public Radio recently did a story on you and Amy Klobuchar. Listening to MPR brought back memories of your life as a ten year old boy and if you would allow, I would like to come and visit.

If you are interested in me coming to visit, you can respond to the address below and please let me know the steps I need to take in order to be placed on your visiting list.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bernadeia Johnson

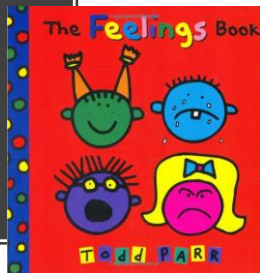
14

I am here as a mother and grandmother.



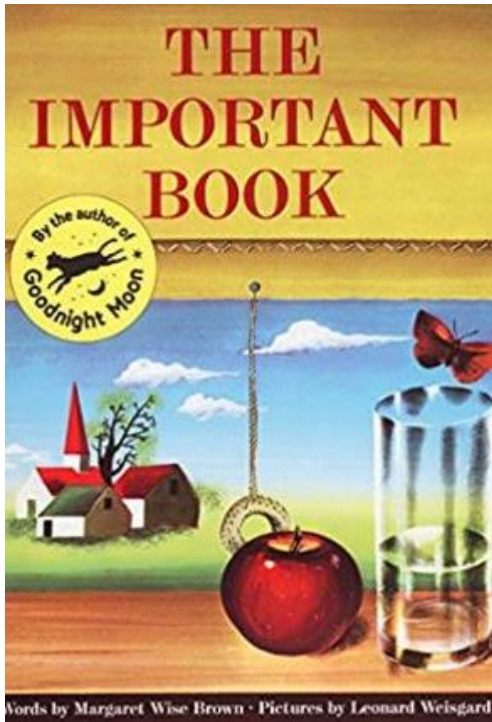
15

Alternatives to Suspension and Punitive Measures



16



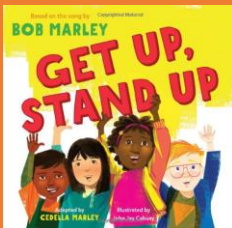


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17

Change the story.  
Rewrite the ending.

Decide today that Black, Brown, Special Education, and FRL students are going to THRIVE in Minnesota, and that YOU are going to ensure that they do.



18

## Resources

Chakara, M. (2017, December 8). **From preschool to prison: The criminalization of black girls.** Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2017/12/08/443972/preschool-prison-criminalization-black-girls/>

Hawkins, B. (2014, September 5). MPS' suspension ban for youngest students part of effort to reduce glaring racial disparities in discipline. **Miniport.** Retrieved from <https://www.minnpost.com/education/2014/09/mps-suspension-ban-youngest-students-part-effort-reduce-glaring-racial-dispar/>

Johnson, B., Parker, J. & Young, R. (2018, April 12). When it comes to discipline, Minnesota schools struggle with racial disparities. [Radio program] WBUR Boston. Retrieved from <https://www.wbur.org/hersandrow/2018/04/12/minnesota-school-discipline-racial-disparities>

Meek, S. & Austin Jr., R. L. (2019, October 15). Opinion: Let's never see another first grader in handcuffs. **The Hechinger Report.** Retrieved from <https://hechingerreport.org/opinion-lets-never-see-another-first-grader-in-handcuffs/>

Phaneuf, Taryn. (2019, March 22). Looking to reduce discipline disparities, House bill would ban preschool suspensions in Minnesota. **Miniport.** Retrieved from <https://www.minnpost.com/education/2019/03/looking-to-reduce-discipline-disparities-house-bill-would-ban-preschool-suspensions-in-minnesota/>

